

(all candles will) burn (out) by jjjjuicy

Series: burn [2]

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King, Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Dialogue Heavy, Eddie Kaspbrak & Eleven | Jane Hopper Are Twins, Eddie Kaspbrak Has Powers, F/M, M/M, Slow To Update

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Dustin Henderson, Eddie Kaspbrak, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Hanlon, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Richie Tozier, Robin Buckley, Stanley Urisk, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Beverly Marsh & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Dustin Henderson & Eddie Kaspbrak, Eddie Kaspbrak & Lucas Sinclair, Eddie Kaspbrak & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Eddie Kaspbrak & Mike Wheeler, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Eleven | Jane Hopper & Eddie Kaspbrak, Eleven | Jane Hopper & Richie Tozier, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Robin Buckley & Eddie Kaspbrak, Steve Harrington & Eddie Kaspbrak, Will Byers & Eddie Kaspbrak

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-12-15

Updated: 2021-04-08

Packaged: 2022-04-01 01:55:04

Rating: Not Rated

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 16

Words: 17,704

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

The candle bathes in fire, unaware his wax is melting.

A Sequel To: (i am willing to) burn (for you)

1. 1

Author's Note:

hello, and welcome to book two! this is a sequel, and it will be confusing to understand if you haven't read the first, so if you haven't please, go check that out! it's called (i am willing to) burn (for you)

October 1st, 1987

Jonathon sets down a plate of eggs and bacon in front of Will while El is getting orange juice from the fridge and four cups. She pours them and sets them out in front of everybody. It's Thursday morning and they're eating breakfast- Hopper and Joyce had already left for work before most of them woke up. There had been reports that said there was an expected seven inches of snow the day before, and it had been snowing throughout the night, but none of it stuck and instead left slush on the roads. Nevertheless, school was already cancelled that day. Usually, this means that Nancy will be there soon, and Mike, too.

Right now, they're all still in their pajamas. It took a while to get used to the new living arrangement, but everyone enjoys it. The house is pretty big and Eddie has his own room now, so he doesn't have to go to the bathroom to get dressed every morning like how he did with Eleven. She's still next door, though, so he can always crawl into her bed if he had a bad dream.

It's been over a year since they killed Pennywise, but Eddie's nightmares are almost always about It. Some were about dying, or El dying, or someone else dying, but it's the drooling clown and orange lights that takes up the majority of his sleeping terror. He doesn't remember most of them- just the feeling. The feeling is enough that he can't sleep without El next to him, but she doesn't mind. Or she doesn't tell Eddie if she does.

When they first all moved in together, Eddie felt like the odd one out, again. He never got close to Jonathon or Joyce before then, but it turns out it doesn't take long when you live with someone and you're

the ring bearer at their wedding, which Eddie was technically too old for, but did anyways. He started calling Hopper "Dad" much earlier than he called Joyce "Mom", especially since he felt guilty- like he was replacing Sonia. Then he remembers that she knew about who he was and where he came from. She knew about El and all the children who were being hurt, and never did anything about it. She convinced him he was *sick* and *weak* and *delicate*. She hadn't been a good mother. Joyce, on the other hand, was sweet, and caring, and ate vegetables. She cried and hugged him when he called her Mom for the first time. He started to think about it of more of an upgrade, which felt *really* shitty, but Sonia was shitty so he guesses it's okay.

Eddie is happy.

He is so, so happy. He, El, Will, and all the others use the train to see the Losers all the time, even though Joyce and Hopper are still a little worried because of the whole It debacle. But It's gone for good- they know that. They're safe, and Richie's safe, and safety is good.

Sometimes, when Eddie can't wait, he reaches out to a Loser (usually Richie) in the Void to talk. It's particularly tiring and inconveniences them sometimes, so he doesn't do it often, but sometimes he just needs to see one of the Losers and he can't wait seventeen hours on a crowded train for them.

"Just eggs." Jonathon says, placing down a plate with no bacon in front of Eddie. It might be because Sonia, but he doesn't like bacon.

"Thanks. Did you put pepper in these?"

"Of course, I put pepper in them." Jonathon scoffs, going to make another two plates for El and himself with both eggs and bacon. He does so, then sits down at the table.

"Any plans for today?" Jonathon asks as he stabs some food with his fork and brings it into his mouth.

"We wanted to start our campaign, but Mike insists he needs some more time to perfect it." Will says, shaking his head. "I don't know why. Nancy read it and said it sounded fun, and you *know* we've

forced her to learn how to play, so she's not bullshitting."

"Maybe he's procrastinating and did nothing." El offers, taking a sip of her juice.

"We'll have Max beat him up, then." Eddie jokes. He and Max have joined in on a few campaigns, but not all of them. As they got older, they started playing less than in former years, but Dustin, Lucas, Will, and Mike had an attachment to the game that Max and Eddie didn't share. El never plays- she prefers to watch, and the rules confuse her, so nobody forces her to. They got El, Nancy, and Jonathan to join in on a shorter campaign one time and it hadn't turned out well. They do not speak of it.

In one month and six days, Eddie's turning sixteen. It's almost surreal how he has this perfect life. Anyone would be jumping at the chance to have one like his- they don't struggle for money, he's out to his town and nobody messes with him, he has a boyfriend he sees regularly, and he loves his parents and siblings. It's so different than where he was when he lived with Sonia: deeply in the closet, feeling unloved and alone. He only wishes that he met El sooner, and knew she existed before he did. He can't even imagine his life if he had gotten to grow up knowing he had a sister- maybe he could've helped her escape the lab earlier and then she never would have opened the Gate in Hawkins, and she would have never had to deal with any of the things she did have to.

He can't change the past, and he doesn't know the future, but for now, he knows that everyone he loves is safe.

He's never had security like this. Maybe that's why he feels like it's going to break any second.

Maybe that's why there's something nagging him, telling him that he doesn't belong.

2. 2

Summary for the Chapter:

this story will have slow updates for now, but i imagine they'll pick up later!

Stupid. This is stupid. Dad and Mom are going to hate him, and so is Will and Jonathon and El. They're all going to hate him. But what can he do? He shoves money he has from working some shifts with Joyce in his backpack and puts on his maroon hoodie, pulling the hoodie onto his head. It's raining, but he doesn't want to have to bring a raincoat and a sweatshirt, so he's just decided on one- the latter would be more useful. He picks up a piece of paper from his desk and a pen, scribbling a quick note and placing it on his bed. He sighs.

He shouldn't be doing this. He shouldn't be leaving.

But the same voice that had told him to go to Derry is now telling him to leave Hawkins, and he can't ignore it any longer, like a ringing in his ears that not even white noise can drown out.

He opens his window, figuring he could climb down the tree outside. He throws one leg over to straddle the window frame, one leg inside the house and one leg outside- he's starting to reach for the tree when his door swings open.

Shit. He turns his head and faces the doorway with a guilty look and no explanation. He's met with El, staring at him.

"Eddie?" She asks, her eyes flickering to his hood and the backpack. She can definitely tell this isn't one of those times he sneaks out to have a sleepover with Lucas.

"E-Ellie." Eddie replies.

"Where... are you going?"

"Out." He answers weakly.

She takes a step inside the room, looking around. Her eyes land on the note on his bed- she gives him a skeptical look then picks it up and scans it. "I love you all very much." She reads. "I'm sorry. I'll be back. Don't know when." She puts the paper back down with a frown, looking over him again. "You're leaving." She states.

"I-" He deflates. "Yeah."

He face is a mixture of shock and betrayal. "Why?"

"I just... know I have to." Eddie tries to reason. God, this is so much harder than slipping away and never having to say goodbye.

"Wait here. Please. Just five minutes. I'll get my stuff."

"What? El, no." He shakes his head, eyes going wide. "I can't ask you to do that."

El furrows her eyebrows. "You're not asking- I'm telling. Wait five minutes."

"Okay."

Eddie stares at the spot where his twin sister had disappeared from. It's better this way, if he leaves right now. He doesn't have to say goodbye and he doesn't put Eleven in danger. He can probably get a head start if he goes right now.

So he does.

He grabs the tree with both his hands then swing his over leg over the window sill and slides off so he can get a hold of the tree. It wobbles a bit from the added weight, but he's able to start his descent before he sees any signs of his sister. He thinks about her packing as quickly as she can in her room, throwing some money in from her piggy bank and taking her favorite sweatshirt, and feels momentarily guilty. He should stop, shouldn't he? Get to the ground and wait for her there?

No.

No, he can't put her in danger. She's had a life before him and she can have one after him, too. It's not like he's never coming back- it's like a vacation. Eddie would never abandon everything he's found in Hawkins. His *home*.

He's thinking of this as more of an impromptu adventure as he walks down the street- he didn't want to use his bike- on his way to the bus stop. But Hopper and Joyce probably wouldn't want him back. They'll be angry with him.

That's fine. He has a plan, even if it's a very vague one, based off of stories he's heard from Eleven.

He's going to find Kali.

He doesn't know why he's so drawn to her, but he knows that El did something like this back when she was living alone with Hopper, before the Mind Flayer. Hopper had welcomed El back after that, hadn't he? But El's El and Eddie is Eddie.

He's been thinking that less and less, but it's still there- that Hopper likes El more. Wasn't Eddie, after all, just an obligation? If he were a normal kid with no powers, then Hopper wouldn't have taken him in. He'd be jumping around from house to house in foster care until he aged out of the system. He would have never had a home.

Whatever. He had a home in Hawkins and now he's leaving it, so it clearly doesn't matter to him much, anyways.

Eddie huffs, pulling off the sidewalk to duck at the side of a house. He crouches down behind a bush, not wanting to just be standing in the middle of the street. He needs to find Kali, but he doesn't want to talk to her just yet. That can wait until they're in person and he knows he can trust her. He closes his eyes, letting darkness fall around him.

He sees Kali in front of him, seated on a chair backwards and holding some cards in her hand, like he caught her in the middle of a game. She's laughing at something, so Eddie imagine's she's with the other people Ellie told him about. He likes that she's safe. Even though he never met her, Eddie knows that El thinks of her as a sister, which

means that they're sort of siblings, too. It's going to be nice to meet her.

He pulls out of the Void, knowing where Kali is- Chicago, still, which he's thankful for because it would have sucked if she were somewhere further. This is only a three hour trip on a bus- that's basically nothing compared to how long the ride to Derry he makes so often.

He comes out of the bush and looks around, making sure El is nowhere to be seen. Once he confirms she's not around, he restarts his journey to the bus stop.

3. 3

October 2nd, 1987

The bus ride was uneventful, but now Eddie's in Chicago and running completely on instinct to find Kali. El mentioned that they were hidden in a warehouse through an alley, but they had been caught so they had to move. Eddie can't imagine they're in such a different place, though; they probably just ended up in another warehouse.

It takes about forty-five minutes for Eddie to realize that he's right. He finds himself pulled to a warehouse, but there's no graffiti or lights outside like El said. They must be laying lower than they had before- that's fine. It's not like Eddie's going to sell them out.

He takes a deep breath and hopes they won't shoot him on site as he approaches then opens the door. It creaks as he takes a step in, gathering his surroundings. It's dark and messy, but it seems they kept some aspects of their old life- namely, there's a table surrounded by people playing cards under a lamp. As Eddie looks around more, he sees graffiti the floor and walls, but he doesn't get much time to observe.

"You know this one, Kali?" The one with a mohawk quips smartly, jutting his chin out towards Eddie. This one must be Axel, and his triangular features and even more triangular spikes match El's descriptions perfectly.

The dark skinned girl Eddie recognizes as Kali cocks her head to the side. "No." She says thoughtfully, and the one who must be Dottie squeals with laughter, slapping her hand of cards face down against the table. The others, who Eddie assumes to be Funshine and Mick, turn to face the unfolding scene.

Axel stands up from his chair and approaches Eddie, towering over him. "Alright. You have five seconds to scram, or I carve you like a turkey." The spider hater says, pointing his knife, like it's going to scare him. Eddie is reminded of Henry, who definitely had said that

exact line to him before. Man, bullies need to get more creative. Despite knowing that he could easily overpower Axel, a chill runs down Eddie's spine and he fights the urge to shiver, because a thousand possibilities where he doesn't react in time or something worse happens play through his head.

"Get that thing out of my face," Eddie says, raising his eyebrows. "Or I'll make sure you regret it."

"You playing with fire, kid?" Axel laughs.

"Something like that." Eddie shrugs. He goes to walk around Axel, but the taller man steps in his way, the knife coming closer to Eddie than it was before. Eddie glares at him.

"Axel, I would think that you would have learned your lesson." Kali says from behind them at the table, carrying her words like every one she utters carries great importance.

Axel turns to face her. "Whad'ya mean?"

Kali raises an eyebrow, looking at him like he's stupid. "I know a certain kid who walked in here one time, like him, and made you look like a little bitch."

"Yeah?" Axel scoffs. "You think-?" He gestures vaguely to Eddie, then pauses and slowly turns to face him again. "Huh." He says, looking over him. Then he throws two hands up in mock surrender and takes a step back.

"What number are you?" Kali asks, getting up from her seat at the table and looking over Eddie with interest. Eddie swallows as she approaches, gathering the bundles of nerves into his stomach. He's not coming here blind- he's known the things Kali and her friends have done, and he knows that they'll expect the same from him, too.

Unless they don't know about his powers.

"Twelve. Eleven told me about you."

"Eleven." Kali repeats breathlessly. "How is she? Is she alright?"

Eddie nods. "More than alright. She's happy."

"With the policeman?"

"Yes."

"So, why are you here?" Kali begins to walk in a circle around Eddie, analyzing him. It makes Eddie feel like prey, and he doesn't like the feeling.

"I'm her twin brother. We only figured out about each other a little over a year ago. She's the best thing that ever happened to me." He explains. Her gaze prances over him like he's a book and she's a student.

"So, why are you here?" Kali repeats, stopping in front of Eddie to face him.

"I don't know." He admits. "I just had to leave. And she's told me stories about you all- how you protected her. Even if she left- you helped her."

"I'm sorry, Kali." Axel butts in, appearing next to her his elbow rested on her shoulder. She crosses her arms and looks up at him like he's a misbehaving toddler, which he takes no notice to. "How can a little boy be useful? At all? We have everyone we need and we don't even know if he has powers."

Kali seems to actually mull this idea over. "Axel, how are you useful?" She asks. "Anyone could throw knives with the world's most average accuracy. And *you're* not my brother."

"Har-har." He says, glaring down at her. "Fuck you."

Eddie almost tells them that he can do what El does and more, but he stops himself. He knows that if he told them that, they'd immediately ask him to help them find people who they couldn't, and Eddie doesn't want to have the blood of anything else on his hands.

He believes everyone has a reason, even poor ones, for what they do. It was just hungry. Brenner wanted to create something special. Those who worked for him just wanted to get paid so their families

could live comfortably. Eddie knows that he would kill anyone- *anyone*- to protect Eleven, if she needed him to. He can almost understand why someone would hurt innocent children.

No. No he can't.

He still doesn't think they deserve to *die*. Even if he could, realistically, find anyone-

Eddie pauses.

Find anyone.

Shit. Shit. She knows exactly where he is.

Notes for the Chapter:

you guys didn't really think i'd keep them separated,
did you??

4. 4

They didn't have an extra room for Eddie to stay in, so Kali offered to room with Mick and let Eddie take her room until they can find a better arrangement. Eddie's unsure how long he intends to stay with them, but he agrees anyways. Her room is messy and the bed is unmade, which makes Eddie's finger twitch- it doesn't take lot for him to make the bed and smooth out the sheets before he quietly sits down, folding his hands together in between his knees and allowing his eyes to flicker around the room.

Eleven knows where he is, or at least, knows how to find out. She could be on her way here, and it would be entirely Eddie's fault. He hadn't considered that she's be able to find him when he was leaving- it simply didn't cross his mind. Now Hopper's probably on the way here.

Eddie closes his eyes- he wants to see her, but not draw her in. The Void forms around him and El appears, sitting on a bus seat and gazing out a window that Eddie can't see. Next to her is a black bag that probably contains clothes. He sighs, and decides to pull.

As soon as she's in, she turns her head to face him. "Took you long enough." She says, frowning. Her eyes contain a sadness and betrayal that makes Eddie squirm, yet he's unable to look away from the eyes boring into his soul. "You left me." She adds, and the tremble in her voice makes him shake.

"You- you shouldn't have followed me." He says despite how horrible he feels- he had left to protect her. She doesn't need to follow him. It's stupid that she is. That's a rule, isn't it? Don't be stupid? She should have just let Eddie break then be on her way. She has Will and Jonathon for brothers, two parents, Mike Wheeler, and all her friends. As strange as it felt to be apart from his family, Eddie felt a

sort of... freedom that he doesn't feel in the Void, looking at his twin.

"You're with Kali." She states simply.

"Yeah. Yeah, I am." He clears his throat. A thought comes to his mind, of Hopper being in the seat on the bus behind her with his pinched eyebrows, set jaw, and disappointed face. "You didn't tell Hopper, right?"

El shakes her head. "It's four AM. He hasn't even stirred."

"...Will?" He asks, raising his eyebrow and gnawing at his lip. The idea of Will worriedly bouncing his knee and picking or chewing at his nails until they bleed makes Eddie's stomach twist just as much.

"Nobody." El says. Then adds casually, "I'm excited to see Kali again."

Eddie opens and closes his mouth, searching for words. "I don't think you-"

"I don't think you get to decide what's good for me. I do."

Eddie frowns, but concedes. "What time will you be here by?"

"I don't know. I got on the first bus after yours. I'll see you soon."

Eddie smiles softly, waves, waits for a wave back (El just lifts her hands and wiggles her fingers slightly), then removes himself from the Void. He sighs and flops back down on the bed.

Moments later, the doorknob to the bedroom twists and Kali enters quietly, her mouth pressed together and poised like a cat ready to pounce. "Hello, Twelve."

Eddie props himself on an elbow and looks at her. "Hey, Kali."

"How do you like it here?" She asks, motioning around.

Eddie follows where her hand is pointing and decides to give her an honest answer. "It's dirty."

Kali snorts a bit and smiles, pushing some clutter to the side of a desk and jumping up to sit on it. "I've been told." She bites her lip like she's trying to say something but can't, and Eddie has a feeling he knows the question she's asking before she does. "You... Are you really not like us? Like Eleven and I?"

Eddie blinks once, then twice. "Yes." He lies. "I've never been."

Kali frowns, and Eddie suspects she was hoping for him to say he can track people like his sister, but that's not why he's here. Revenge doesn't suit him.

"You never told me why you came here."

"I've... been called." He answers truthfully, a sigh washing over him like a wave that makes his skin prickle up with goosebumps.

"Called?" Kali asks, pulling at a finger of her glove. Eddie nods.

"I get pushed and pulled around a lot. I don't really have a say in it. I got pushed here."

"Maybe that's your power, then." The girl in front of him suggests. Eddie doesn't think it's a power- it's more like a curse. He was called to the Losers, then to the Party, then back to Derry, and now to Kali. He just wants to sit down and stay, but how can he when a magnetic force insists he never belongs? "Always being in the right place at the right time."

Eddie smiles. "Yeah, maybe that's it." He agrees.

Kali pushes herself off the desk and goes to leave, but stops at the door, just after her fingers brush the knob. She slowly turns back to Eddie. "When your sister was here, she wanted a makeover."

Eddie fully pushes himself up into a seated position. Ever since Max did his eyeliner and Hopper found him and hadn't minded, Eddie wore makeup considerably more often. But what if Kali is just

messing with him? "I'm a boy." He says, testing the waters.

"Axel wears eyeliner." Kali shrugs. "So, what do you think?"

Eddie let El and Max practice on him and sometimes he does it himself and washes it off right after; he once put on some for Richie, who said that Eddie looked hot. Eddie smirks when he remembers what El once said she learned from the two girls- "I think it's bitchin'."

Kali's face breaks into a grin at the memory. She nods. "Come on, boy. Let's get you prettied up."

Notes for the Chapter:

i was explaining the plot of this to my friend and she said "oh so eddie is elsa?" and i cried

5. 5

Eddie feels weird.

He has *never* dressed like this before- eyeliner frames his eyes, and he's wearing Mick's pants because he doesn't have his own that the rest of them deem "cool enough". The aforementioned pants black-with gray camo- are too big on him, so they're rolled at the bottom and he's wearing a belt with a lot of chains. He feels weird with such baggy clothes on, but Dottie insists he looks cool. He's also wearing an oversized dark green shirt that he thinks is from Axel. It's topped off with his fanny pack that he refused to take off, except now it's spray painted black and silver instead of red. Eddie's fiddling with the zipper, trying to make sure it doesn't get dried shut. After opening and closing it a few times, he thinks it's good.

"You look sick." Dottie says, nodding. Eddie almost stands up and screams- he's not sick. He's not sick. He doesn't need medicine or doctors or pills, he's fine, he's not sick-

"No." Eddie says to Dottie, trying his best to make his glare look intimidating. "I am *not* sick."

Dottie looks at him, confused, and tugs a piece of her knotty purple hair. "As in 'cool', you nut." She says slowly, and a part of Eddie fizzles out. Oh. *Cool*. Yeah. Eddie smiles to himself. Eddie looks *sick*. "We did a better job on the girl, though. Whaddya think, Funny?"

Funshine shrugs, his massive shoulders bobbing up, then down. "I'm not great at this kind of thing. If he likes it, then I'm happy."

"You big teddy bear." Dottie sighs, laying backwards onto his chest like he were a wall she can relax on. She shuts her eyes.

"Dottie, go get the folder." Kali instructs, her arms crossed and finger tapping against her forearm.

Dottie opens one eye, pops her bubble gum, then shrugs and flounces out of the room.

"The folder?" Eddie asks, frowning slightly. "Of what?"

"Pictures. I'll explain more when she comes back." Kali says.

"No." Eddie says quickly. "I can't do what Ellie does. I can't find people like that."

"Neither can we." Mick points out. "You can still help."

Eddie blinks and obtains a full on frown, furrowing his eyebrow. Dottie prances back in with a stuffed manila folder and hands it off to Funshine, who hands it Axel, who shoves it to Mick, who hands it to Kali, who presents it to Eddie. Eddie stares at it for a second before taking it tentatively, opening it on his lap and staring down at the information. He begins to flip through it while they all look at him—it's pictures of people, newspaper clippings, official-looking documents probably obtained through illegal means, and random sticky notes.

Eddie intends to flip through then promptly say he knows nothing, sorry, he can't help. But this doesn't happen. He flickers through the pages and stops when he sees a pair of eyes calling to him.

He falters, staring at the face in front of him with a cold grip of dread.

"You know him?" Kali asks, pointing her finger towards the man with brown eyes.

"No." Eddie lies quickly.

"You're lying!" Axel responds, leaning closer.

"Do you know him?" Kali asks, narrowing her eyes. "Did he hurt you? Your sister?"

"He's my..." Eddie trails off, his eye flicking back to the picture. The face is of the man in the picture that sat on his mantel in a frame, a smile on his face and his arm around Sonia. The man he was told was his father for most of his life. Frank Kaspbrak, with brown eyes and brown hair being the only physical similarity between the two. "It's complicated."

A sympathetic sigh falls from Kali's lips and her hand rests on his shoulder. "It's normal to think of the bad men who hurt you as your family, because that's what they told us to th-"

"No. Not like Papa." Eddie says, shaking his head. "He smuggled me out of the lab to his wife when I was two. He didn't... make it, but I got away. I grew up seeing pictures of him. I thought he was my dad."

"Two?" Axel asks. Kali's hand falls off Eddie's shoulder. "You don't remember anything?"

"Uh, no. Nothing."

"And you don't have powers?"

"Nothing."

"Then why are you here?" He asks, almost looking offended. Suddenly, Eddie feels out of place, like his gaze is burning holes into his skin. Axel turns to Kali. "This kid is a fugitive. They've probably been looking for him since he first got out- he's a liability. Kali, he's got to go."

Kali opens her mouth, looking to Axel then to Eddie and back again. "He's Twelve."

"He's just a normal kid. He doesn't even remember that shit. He's got to go."

Eddie doesn't want to be kicked out- he needs to be here, but he doesn't know why. He'll figure it out soon, and he can't leave before he does. Should he tell them what he can do? "Well, I-"

"Kali?" A voice rings out from downstairs- everyone turns to face the door, but Eddie knows the voice from anywhere. It's distinctly Eleven. Kali freezes, and at the same time, Axel draws his knife while everyone else either grabs something or pulls up their fists. "It's Eleven." The voice calls. "Is Eddie here?" Nobody responds. "You guys know I know he's here." He can hear her climbing the stairs.

It takes a few moments, but those in front of the doorway step back

to create a path to Eddie and Kali. From around the doorway, Eddie's sister appears wearing clothes and makeup he's never seen her in- she must have changed since he saw her in the Void.

Her hair is slicked back behind her ears, her eyeliner and eyeshadow is smudged around her eyes, and there isn't an ounce of color in his outfit other than her nails, which are still painted the light purple Ben Hanscom bought El for Christmas.

She looks him up and down with a smile. "Bitchin'."

Eddie shakes his head. "*Sick.*"

Notes for the Chapter:

eddie's fuckin sick yo!!! nobody can tell me that
eddie getting a new definition for sick isn't tight as
fuck

6. 6

Notes for the Chapter:

i haven't posted in a second! sorry about that! happy new years guys!

October 2nd, 1987

Eddie had gotten to Kali, technically, very early in the morning. After his whole makeover, he went to sleep at around 3 AM with rings of eyeliner around his eyes like a raccoon.

Well into the afternoon, he wakes up with El clinging around his waist, her face buried into his side. He tries his best to peel her off gently as to not wake her, but his stirring disturbs her and her eyes flutter open.

"Don't leave." She mumbles, holding him tighter but keeping her eyes shut. "Please."

"Just getting breakfast." Eddie says, pondering the best way to remove this koala from his side. He decides on sticking out his tongue and swiping it across her forehead. He watches as he face screws up and she recoils, removing her hands from around him and pushing him away by his chest.

"Ew, gross!" She whines, her eyes finally opening and landing on an Eddie that is smiling wickedly.

Eddie pokes her nose then rolls out of bed, leaving his sister grumbling. "You coming?"

"They don't even have Eggos here." She grumbles good-naturedly, grabbing at the blankets and pulling them up to her chin as she resettles herself in Kali's bed. Eddie takes that as a no. He leaves the room with a smile on his lips.

It's a Friday morning, and they *should* have school, except it had

actually ended up snowing and they got a real snow day off. This resulted in Max inviting herself over- she likes to leave the house early to avoid her family- and going to see Will, who always wakes up early in the morning. Even on weekends.

"Eddie, wake up!" Max pounds on his door with a fist, a devilish grin spread over her face. She still has her hat on and her scarf is hanging around her neck, the cold turning her nose a dusty pink. Will is behind her, waiting for Eddie to come out his room. "Dude, we're gonna come in! You better not be jacking off!" She calls through the door. Her plan for the day is to call over the rest of the party and go sledding, then come back for hot cocoa. She had brought a whole box of the powder packets, too.

"Ew, gross, Max!" Will says at the same time Hopper calls from downstairs, "*Maxine!*"

Max just giggles and twists the doorknob down, ready to push it open. It's unlocked, which is a little odd, but she doesn't pay mind to it, instead ready to bust in. She counts down from three, and when she gets to zero, she pushes the door forward and walks in. She notices the empty bed and open window, but her eyes skim over the note scrawled on white paper that sits against his white bedsheets.

She looks around, confused, before Will speaks up. "El's room. He goes there when he has nightmares."

Max doesn't question it. "Oh, *Shorts!*" She calls out in a sing song voice, leaving the room and dashing through the hallway with a smile reclaiming it's territory on her face. She doesn't bother to knock this time- she throws open El's door.

And finds it empty.

Dread twists in her gut. This kind of thing is supposed to be over. Maybe they just went to a party? On a Thursday night?

"Where are they?" Max asks Will, though she doesn't turn around. Instead, she approaches El's drawers. The normally folded clothes are pushed and shoved out of order and some are left open. An idea forms in Max's head, but she doesn't know how to confirm it, until

her eyes land on Eleven's underwear drawer. Sure, it's creepy to look through something personal like that, but Max knows El well enough by now. And she knows El's favorite bra and underwear, because it's the same one she takes whenever she has a sleepover in Derry or *anywhere*.

Max rifles through the drawer. It's not there. She goes through her pajamas- her favorite ones aren't there either. The oversized band shirt that she had asked to borrow to wear to school and then stole because she liked it so much is gone, along with a few more shirts that Max knows Eleven owns.

"What are you doing?" Will is asking.

"They're gone." Max replies frantically.

"They probably just snuck over to Mike's to sleep over, or something." Will reasons. Max falters, because that would make sense. Hopper doesn't really like when El sleeps over at Mike's, even when Eddie's with her, so her sneaking out to go see him would be something a rebellious teenager would do. And then Eddie tagged along because he didn't want her walking there alone.

Yeah, that makes sense. But-

But...

But, the open window. Eddie never sleeps with the window open- he's talked about his mom and how some of her words are still engrained into him. *Close the window, Eddiebear! You'll catch a chill!* Of course, the only thing Eddie caught when his window was open was Richie, because he would climb in, but the insistent yapping of Sonia Kaspbrak will forever remain drilled into his brain.

"Max?" Will asks softly, noticing how rigid she is.

"Shush." She snaps immediately, making her way back to Eddie's room with Will on her tail, telling her to take a breath, to calm down, they're fine, don't worry. She approaches the window and grabs the windowsill, looking at the tree. She reaches her hand out, and leans forward. She can't reach it, but she's not far off. If she were sitting on

the windowsill, she could reach it, and she could climb down. Which means Eddie and El could, too.

The last piece of evidence is found when she plops down on Eddie's bed with a sigh of defeat and hears the crinkle of paper. She lifts her leg and tugs it out, her stomach going colder than the snow outside when she reads what it says.

I love you all very much.

I'm sorry. I'll be back. Don't know when.

- Love, Eddie

And, added as an afterthought with a different colored pen and sloppier handwriting,

And El.

7.7

Notes for the Chapter:

haven't posted in a hot second! i've just been writing a lot :)

Everyone sits crowded around the kitchen table, muttering to each other. Hopper sits at the head, clutching a mug of coffee in his hands like he's trying to break it while Joyce sits next to him and lets her hand trail up and down his back.

"They're fine... teenage shenanigans... can handle themselves" Max hears her saying to him, though she knows Joyce is equally- if not more- worried. Max herself doesn't know where to stand- clearly, they were packed and left a note, so the likelihood that they are in danger is low. They've probably decided to go camping or go somewhere distant to practice their weird twin powers without being interrupted, but all the others are too caught up in the worst case scenerio to think that.

Will had been the missing boy once.

Jonathon and Joyce were the family of the missing boy, and now they're feeling that again. It must be pretty scary, so Max sympathizes, but she doesn't feel the same stress they do. After all, hadn't Eleven done something like this around the time Max arrived from California?

So far, everybody has been called to see if they're secretly harboring the twins. Lucas, Mike, and Dustin had no idea where they could be, and then Dustin suggested they call Steve and Robin. Steve just got worried and is now on his way over while Max presses the phone to

her ear and listens for Robin.

Eventually when she does pick up, her voice is light and airy. "Robin Buckley." She greets into the phone.

Max smiles. "Hey, Robin. It's Max."

"No, you can't borrow the pleated red skirt. I've told you this already. It's too short for you, and you're just a baby."

"You're, like, less than three years older than me. That's basically nothing- and- and that's not even why I'm calling!"

"No, I'm busy right now. I can't take you and Will for-"

"Robin!" Max hisses into the phone, covering her mouth so nobody can hear her as she speaks into the phone. "I am not asking for weed. This is serious."

"Fine. What?"

"Are Eddie and El at your place?"

Robin laughs. "My parents are out so my girlfriend's over."

"Ah, yes. The girlfriend none of us have ever met but you insist exists."

"She's not ready to come out, yet." Robin retaliates. "Anyway, what's the serious thing?"

"Eddie and El are missing. They left a note and now they're gone."

There's a noise on the other side of the line that sounds like Robin covered the receiver to say something to whoever is in the room, and then Max hears muffled laughter. "What's so funny?" Max asks, frowning. "They can be in danger."

"They left a note, Max, so they're obviously not kidnapped or something. And plus, nobody could kidnap those two. They'd fry anyone who tried." Then Robin sighs into the phone. "They left in the night, right? Call Derry in a few hours." She offers.

"Derry?" Max asks, looking over to the rest of the group in the middle of the kitchen, talking while she's attached to the wall. "They would have said they were going to Derry, if they were."

"Not... necessarily." Robin says slowly, as if she's trying to will Max to understand what she's saying, but Max is lost. Robin huffs. "Okay. Picture this. Eddie wants to spend some... alone time... with his boyfriend, and he might not want his parents and friends knowing that, so he goes to sneak out. El wakes up, finds him, and goes with him because she's El and she never leaves his side." She theorizes.

Max thinks this over.

"Ew." She says at first, but the theory checks out. If something happened to them, there would be no note, and there's no way anyone could have willingly forced them to write a note. And even then, they're smart enough that they would have given some sort of signal that something was wrong. But they didn't. "You're probably right. I'll make some calls later, but they're probably still traveling now."

"Good luck, Madmax."

"Good luck with your imaginary girlfriend."

"She is not-"

Max hangs up with a small laugh, then walks herself over to the table. She doesn't sit down, but she does put her hands on the edge and lean against it as all eyes trail to her.

She's the carrier of news, and every face hopes that she's going to tell them that Eddie and El had a surprise sleepover at Robin's house and forgot to tell everybody. Max doesn't want to tell anybody the theory Robin just suggested. Especially not Hopper. Or Joyce. She'll probably laugh about it with Will, later.

"Steve is on his way, but he hasn't seen them. Neither has Robin." Max answers definitely, and every person in the room deflates just a bit.

Hopper puffs out his cheeks then throws his hands up. "I'm gonna call Owens." He decides.

"No." Max replies instantly.

"If they're gone-"

"You don't need to bring Owens into this." Max shakes her head.

"You don't get a say in this." Hopper replies coldly. "They can be in danger."

Max stands her ground. "They're not lab rats, you know."

"Excuse me?"

"You don't have to run to Owens for every little thing. They're teenagers, not science experiments. If I went missing but left a note, would you call Owens?" She says. Hopper stays silent. "Exactly. This is a teenager thing. Not an-end-of-the-world thing."

Hopper leans back in his chair. The air is tense and thick. "She's right." Will says eventually with a sharp nod to his head. "There's even a note. They'll be back in a few days."

"Why wouldn't they say where they're going?" Joyce asks softly, with a frown.

"They just..." Will shrugs his shoulders. "Didn't want us to know."

"We'll call Derry in a few hours." Max suggests, then quickly realizes that if Eddie is actually there, she probably shouldn't have said anything.

"They'd tell us if they went to Derry."

Will's eyes go wide and then he laughs, and something tells Max that he got it faster than she did. He looks over and mouths 'Richie?' to Max with a small smirk. She wiggles her eyebrows. "I think they're fine." Will says to his dad.

"What's so funny?"

"Nothing!"

"No! I want to know!"

8. 8

Notes for the Chapter:

in case you haven't noticed, the past few chapters have been slow updates!! this is gonna continue because of schoolwork and volunteering etc, but please know that i have not forgotten about this fic lol!! xo <3

October 5th, 1987

Three days ago, Eddie first arrived to Chicago and met Kali and the others, but it feels like longer than that. So far, they haven't done anything *too* illegal, like murder, and they haven't asked Eddie or El to help, so that's a win for the two. However, Eddie is getting antsy. He was called here for a reason that he doesn't know.

He really does like Kali and her friends, though. Axel is teaching him how to throw knives the normal way, and Kali is teaching him how to skateboard. With his powers, both of these skills would be easy, but it's nice to not have to rely on them. He's pretty good at skateboarding now- going in straight lines, that is- so now he's starting to work on turning and a few basic tricks. When the others come back from a run to the drug store, Dottie reveals the makeup she stole and starts to teach Eddie how to apply his own eyeliner. Funshine and Mack teach him cards. El also takes part of these lessons, but not as frequently. She mainly spends her time with Kali or Eddie, if he's not doing anything.

But even with constant activity, the nagging never leaves Eddie.

He's waiting for something to go wrong at every turn.

He's been waiting for something to go wrong for a while, now. Something always does. He's getting fed up; he likes Kali- he really does- but this life isn't meant for him.

Though he does appreciate the fashion. But, like, he's gay. So, duh.

A few times he's slipped up and used his powers in front of Kali, but she hasn't noticed because El would quickly make it seem like she's responsible for any of it. She's always with him, anyways, so it's easy to fake.

The twist in Eddie's gut thrums harder every day. He knows it's soon, but *come on*. If Maturin wants him to have a purpose, he can speed it up a bit, can't he?

Eddie explains these thoughts to his sister. "I'm going crazy, Ellie." He says, sprawled out on the bed and facing the ceiling with Eleven sitting cross legged next to him.

"You don't like them?"

"I do. But I want to know why I'm here."

El narrows her eyes. "Me, too." She says flatly.

Eddie scoffs. "I didn't ask you to come."

"I know." She says tightly, her posture straightening up.

"Our friends are probably so worried." Eddie says quietly. El nods. "I'm going to check on Richie."

"Mike, too, please." She adds.

Eddie responds with a nod of his own and allows his eyes to flutter shut, willing himself into the Void. It's easy.

He always tries to make it so Richie can't sense him when he's just trying to observe and not talk, but it never works. A part of Eddie always wants to be with Richie, no matter how much he tries to squash it. Richie is sitting on the floor of his bedroom, leaning against the foot of his bed and reading comics. He looks briefly uncomfortable, then looks up from his book to the general direction of Eddie, but remains quiet. Eddie almost pulls out, but Richie places down his book and stands, looking around.

"Might be wishful thinking..." Richie mutters. "But Eds, if you're here, just let me know you're okay? We haven't seen you in a bit. We're all

just hoping you guys are on a rebellious streak." He chuckles, but the grin slips from his face. "...Eds?"

"I'm fine." Eddie says quietly. Richie doesn't hear it- Eddie would have to bring him into the Void to do that- but Eddie can tell he feels it by the way his eyes meet with his own and he smiles softly. Then Eddie opens his eyes- Eleven is wiping some blood off his nose. He doesn't question it and goes to see Mike. He's not surprised to find him with Robin and his brother- Will.

"This is just like Suzie." Robin is saying. "You think she's not real, but she is, and she's totally going to save the world one day and prove you all wrong."

"The world doesn't need any more saving." Mike shakes his head.

"Not fair. I only got to do it once!"

Eddie doesn't stick around too long and makes his way back to El. "He's with Will and Robin." He informs her, and she smiles.

"Happy?"

"Happy."

October 7th, 1987

After Richie's call informing them that Eddie reached out to him, the tension gnawing at the back of everyone's head was relieved. Of course Eddie would talk to Richie. That just made sense. So everyone goes on their merry way, and Hopper complains about how they're missing school, and Will picks up the homework that they'll need to do when they're back. Of course, the worry etched in Hopper and Joyce's faces are evident, but they do their best to conceal it. They'll be home soon, they all told themselves. Soon.

Eddie no idea what he's doing, but he's doing something. He's storming out of this stupid warehouse to an empty alleyway. El is

close behind him, calling for him to stop.

"Eddie!" She shouts, causing everyone to turn their heads. Kali is about to stand to follow them, but El sends her a look that could stop an army and Kali sinks back into her seat. Her brother breaks out of the warehouse from the back door, spilling into daylight. "What are you doing?"

The door behind them closes and as soon as it does, a trashcan goes flying into the wall. Eddie's sizzling with rage and he doesn't know why- he only knows that something is going to happen and *soon*. "I want to go home." Eddie answers quietly. "I don't want to be here."

"Then let's go. Mom and Dad and everyone miss us."

"I can't." He responds. Then, louder, "I fucking can't!" A second trashcan goes flying into the wall and Eddie shouts. "I need to be here- *Maturin says*-"

"Maturin?"

"God!"

"God?"

"God!" Eddie groans. He's starting to sweat, so he pulls his jacket off and lets it fall to the ground. Taking deep breaths, he allows for oxygen to be restored to his lungs before he says anything more. "I died, Eleven. Outside of Neibolt, I was dead. And- and you just need to trust me, okay? I'm here because I need to protect Kali. Whatever is going to happen, *I* need to fix. It's up to me. Not you."

"Eddie, maybe we should see Owens about what happened, again." El says softly. In the background, Eddie can distantly hear car doors open and close, and he can feel El's hand on his shoulder. It feels condescending. "See a therapist, maybe?"

"I don't need a doctor."

El shakes his head. "You know that's not what I mean." Eddie hates the doctor, and everyone is aware. When he had to take his yearly physical for the first time since he moved in with Hopper, Eddie had

a breakdown. He refused to go to the doctors office. He begged not to go. He insisted he wasn't sick. It was horrible to watch and it took several days to finally convince him, so they take the doctor seriously. Eddie hates all forms of them- dentist, therapist, psychologist. Anything.

Eddie looks tired as he opens his mouth to respond.

Then his head snaps towards to door, his eyes go wide, and he freezes. "No." He mumbles softly.

From inside the warehouse, a gunshot rings out.

Summary for the Chapter:

ahahaha... whoopsies? :)

Eddie didn't want to open the door, so instead, El went into the Void to find Kali. She's upstairs, sitting on her old bed and looking straight ahead. Not saying anything. Tears are running down her face.

After El exits the Void, the twins creep to the door and open it, scanning to see if anyone is there; four people are visible, all holding large guns and surrounding everyone except for Kali. Eddie turns to El and presses a finger to his lips before sliding into the warehouse as silently as possible and ducking behind some boxes. El follows.

"This is it?" El whispers, and Eddie responds with a nod. "We need to get upstairs. That's where Kali is." She continues, looking at the stairs that feel impossibly far.

El exhales and slowly looks over the boxes to Dottie, Mack, Funshine, and Axel, hoping to get one of their attentions. They need a distraction so they can make it up the steps. Her eyes land on Funshine's twisted ponytail, and she used her powers to give it a soft tug, hoping that he'd see her. Funshime looks momentarily confused before his eyes land on her. He seems to get the message because suddenly, the massive man starts wailing as loudly as possible, causing those around him to become immediately uncomfortable. One of the guards shouts at him, causing Eddie and El to break into a silent run to get upstairs as quietly as possible. Once they do, the fake sobs reduce to whimpers to nothing; Eddie lets out a breath of air. Together, the twins creep over to the door of Kali's bedroom to listen in to whatever's happening inside.

"Answer me, Eight." A man's voice says, cool and crisp, like running tap water that leaves a funny taste after you swallow. He gets no response. "You've killed so many of the people who helped me. Who *help* me. You have no idea what you've gotten yourself into. I've been looking for the girl responsible, and it seems I've finally found

her after so long." The voice continues, but Kali remains quiet. Eddie can't see anything, and the anxious voice imagines whoever's in there with Kali covered in blood, with crazed eyes, talking to a dead body. "Fine. I'm going to kill you, and then I'm going to kill your four stupid friends."

Eddie looks over to El to silently ask her if she wants to do anything, but she looks frozen. Petrified.

"No." Kali's voice comes weakly. Shaken up. Eddie's never heard her sound so fragile, and the thought of the girl he admired so devotedly becoming putty in the hands of this man freezes the blood in his veins. "They don't know anything. They just help me so they have a place to stay. Don't hurt them."

"You're talking, now?"

Silence. A cocking of a gun.

Eddie hears Kali whimper. She whimpers, and suddenly El's on her feet and barreling into the room and shouting, "No!"

Eddie's still around the corner, hidden, so he can't see anything, but he doesn't dare move. He doesn't even think he's breathing, at this point. All he can register is that his sister- his *sister*, who he couldn't live without- is now in danger and he has no idea how to save her. He wants to throw up or cry or call Hopper or all three.

"Eleven." The man says, tasting the word with reverence, like its chocolate.

"Papa." His sister replies. Eddie feels like he got punch- Dr. Brenner. He's only seen pictures, but never heard his voice, so he couldn't identify him. That's why Eleven had looked so.... devastated. The man who is supposedly dead is right there, and he's aiming a gun at Kali.

"Your brother is here, too, I presume?"

"Brother?" El answers.

She's met with a scoff before anything else. "Don't play dumb with

me. I've been watching *Eddie Kaspbrak* since he was born." Eddie slaps a hand over his mouth to stifle a gasp. "He's quite fascinating, isn't he?"

"He's- not here."

"He is." Eddie can hear a struggle break out, the sound of bodies moving and the resulting grunts and gasps from the fighting. It's finalized with a defeating, watery gasp from his sister. Eddie can taste blood in his mouth. He realizes it's from biting his inner cheek too hard. "And if he were listening in, he'd want to know I have my arm around Kali's throat, and his sister at gunpoint."

That's all it takes. Eddie practically throws himself into the room, and he quickly sees that Brenner wasn't bluffing- Kali's back is pressed against him and his forearm is digging into her throat, causing odd gurgles to be released, and there's a gun trained on Eleven.

The man's practiced face dissolved into a grin. Eddie thinks of how Sonia would look whenever he'd give in and say *Yes, I'll take my pills* or *Okay, I'll tell Bill I can't hang out today*. "Nice to finally see you, Twelve. It's been quite a while, hasn't it?"

"Not long enough." Eddie says, despite the fact that he doesn't remember meeting Brenner in the first place; he might as well be a person he's never seen before. But he's heard enough about him to know that he's ruthless.

"The last time I saw you, you were thirteen." Brenner says. Eddie's head swims- he was being *watched*. Before he knew about Eleven and Hawkins and monsters, Brenner was watching. Does he know about It? "By then, I found someone with more promise. And I thought you were a lost cause, anyway. But it seems I'm wrong."

"He can't do anything." Kali says weakly, her throat constricted. Trying to protect Eddie, still.

"Is that what he told you?" Brenner sneers.

"You're not going to shoot any of us." Eddie cuts him off, balling up his fists. Brenner raises an eyebrow. "You're not going to shoot any of

us, because we're your- your *data*. The gun you're waving around doesn't scare us- not even a bit- even though that's what you want it to do. I'm not scared of you." He says, then he repeats it. "I'm not scared of you!"

Brenner smiles. "I'll kill the four downstairs." He says.

"No!" Kali chokes. She lifts her foot and sends it flying back into his shin, causing him to shout and release her. She stumbles away from him to the twins, grabbing onto Eddie's shoulder for support.

"Now I *definitely* will."

"No- no! I- I have a proposition!" Eddie says. "If- if you let *everyone* else go, I'll come with you. *Willingly*. I won't fight or struggle- I'll *just* come with you."

"Eddie, shut up!" El hisses at the same time Kali says, "I am not letting you do that."

Brenner laughs and extends his arm out to Eddie.

"He's just normal! He doesn't have powers!" Kali argues.

Eddie steps forward and grabs Brenner's hand, causing a thin, predatory smile to grow on his face. "On the contrary, Eight." He says, although his eyes remain glued to the boy. "He's my best work."

With that, Brenner grabs Eddie roughly by the forearm and marches him out, El screaming behind them and Kali in a baffled silence.

"Stop! Eddie!" The younger girl screams, her voice raw. Eddie feels himself jerk back because she's pulling at him.

He can hardly process what's happening- only the harsh, wrinkled fingers of Dr. Brenner digging into his skin. The only real thing in the world is the way his head is reeling and the bile in his throat, as Brenner requests that Eddie would "deal with her". Eddie doesn't need to think to obey- if he doesn't comply, Brenner'll find a way to take El and Kali, too, or he'll hurt someone. Eddie looks over his shoulder to El, and with a tear in his gut, he throws her against the wall like the trash cans in the alleyway. She's so *tiny* that all she can do is cry out-

he hears the thud of her body and he watches as she drops back to the ground and Kali rushes over her. Eddie wants to hurl, but he has to keep going. Brenner tugs him down the steps, out the front entrance of the warehouse, and to the black cars in front. The armed guardsmen follow them out and two followed them into the vehicle. Eddie is sat next to Brenner in the back seat. The car starts moving.

"Good choice." Brenner's voice rings. "Let's chat, shall we?"

10. 10

They don't chat.

Brenner puts his hand at the back of his neck and those words are the last he hears before he slips into unconsciousness.

When he wakes, he's in a bland gray room with one mirror, and he's wearing the same flimsy patient gown he'd have to wear at the hospital when Sonia would take him. He looks into the mirror, and his stomach twists.

He does not look like himself. There's a clunky metal necklace choking him, though he doesn't know what for. And his hair's gone. He's completely bald, with some monitors stuck to his head. He covers his mouth- the only thing he has left is the black eyeliner residue around his eyes that they almost completely washed off. Eleven is gone. Someone is definitely watching him on the other side of the mirror.

He has nothing.

He's alone. He's alone, and he has no idea how long he's been out- are they still in Chicago? Are they in America? Are they even on the same continent? He has no way of knowing.

"Hello?" Eddie calls out. He tries to slip into the Void, and is only met with pain. Hot, searing pain covers his throat like he's never felt, not when he broke his arm, not when the Losers club had split and he didn't talk to Richie for weeks, not even when It had killed him. The pain is exquisite and feels never ending as electric pulses are sent into him through the collar braces against his neck- his entire body feels like it's suddenly immobile, carved of marble and stone, and then it stops. Eddie is on the floor despite not remembering falling. His knees are tucked to his chest, and tears brim his eyes.

He misses El.

He's glad she's not here.

Eleven shut down. As soon as her feet left the ground, as she hit the wall, as she came crashing back to the floor, she was shut down. Non-responsive. Not human. Her entire left arm has a growing bruise and blood is running down the left side of her head from a cut in her forehead that she doesn't bother to clean up.

Kali moved her downstairs onto a couch- this is where she is now- but she hasn't spoken yet. Just stared straight ahead. Everyone else is discussing their next move. She is desperately trying to find Eddie in the Void, but she can't find him anywhere.

Which means he's probably dead.

Eleven doesn't want to be alive.

The thought shocks her. She's never felt so empty before. So desperate. Never thought anything like that. But she can only imagine what Brenner is doing to Eddie- no doubt, torture. And she hadn't been strong enough to save him. She let him go. Will she be able to get him back? What if she can't? What if she never sees him again? What is she going to tell the others? She needs to get back home, but she can't find it in herself to move. It's too hard. She can't fathom how much Dad and Mom and Will and Jonathon and everyone- *everyone*- are going to hate her for this.

Richie. Richie will, the most.

Eddie is gone. The same Eddie who comforted her after nightmares, who helped Will with his homework, who woke Hopper up at 5:00 AM on Father's Day because he was so *damn* excited to have a father to spend it with, is gone.

"It's almost been four hours. Is she dead?" Someone asks, but El doesn't both to figure out who. Four hours? Really?

"Eleven." Kali comes into view, her hand soft on her shoulder and voice even softer. Eleven stays staring at nothing rather than the girl in front of her.

Then, suddenly, it's Eddie in front of her, his boyish voice cooing to

her. "Ellie?" He asks, and Eleven lets out a strangled gasp.

Then Kali is back, and El immediately connects her fist with her sister's face. "Why would you *do* that?" She shouts as Kali stumbles back. She rises from the couch, furious. Kali's nose is bleeding.

"I had to snap you out of it."

"Never, *ever* mess with my head." Eleven warns. Kali doesn't say anything. "What did you want, then?"

"I want to take you back to your policeman." Kali offers.

Eleven looks to Kali, then to Dottie, then to Axel, Mack, and finally, Funshine. She says goodbye to all of them in her head before replying, "I can do it myself." And storming out. She isn't followed. She doesn't expect to be.

On the bus ride back home, she closes her eyes and watches her family even though it makes her feel like she's going to pass out. She's covered in bruises and dried blood, so at this point, she doesn't care what people looking see. If her nose bleeds, so what?

Hopper is watching a movie with his arm thrown around Joyce, who's snuggled up close to him, both perfectly content.

Max is sharing a basket of fries with Lucas.

Mike and Dustin are in the Wheelers's basement, where Mike is teasing Dustin for his former crush on Nancy.

Nancy is with Jonathon and on the phone with Robin, which is a trio Eleven didn't expect. They're discussing college Nancy and Jonathon's life in college, so El stays around longer to listen in; Jonathon briefly mentions the work he's doing and how Nancy would make an excellent model if she'd let him photograph her.

El checks in with the Losers, too. They're all together, talking and laughing. El stays in with them and takes a seat despite the coolness of the water making her shiver, simply because she wants to savor the normalcy. Her eyes stay stuck to Richie, though, mostly out of guilt. He cracks jokes and sticks out his tongue and *everyone laughs*.

"Eddie's in trouble." Eleven says, despite knowing none of them can hear her. She says it again and again and again.

But nobody acknowledges her. She can't do what Eddie does.

Only Eddie can.

She searches for him in the Void. She still can't find him.

11. 11

Notes for the Chapter:

check bottom for tw! there are spoilers

It's almost 12:00 AM when Eleven knocks on the Harrington household's door. She doesn't know why she doesn't go home, but she *can't*. Can't imagine her dad's face when he looks and sees that Eddie's not with her, that she fucked up, that she broke the most important rule- *don't be stupid*.

She's surprised that Steve opens the door and not a parent, but relieved nonetheless.

"Eleven?" Steve asks. She doesn't respond.

She just starts sobbing.

El steps forward and drops into his chest- his arms immediately wrap around her and he lets out a string of curses, asking if she's hurt, where Eddie is, where she's been. She tries to answer, but she can't stop the hiccups and the tears. She doesn't allow him to release her from the hug to call anyone- not yet. The arms wrapped around her makes her feel *good* and it makes her feel *warm* and Steve smells like the hairspray he always uses, all familiar and chemically. She cries until she can't cry any longer, until Steve's parents wake up and ask what's going on, until he finally pries her off him and makes the phone call to Hopper.

Her entire immediate family is over at the Harrington household in minutes, all in pajamas. All worried. All asking for Eddie. As soon as she sees them, though, the tears starts again. How could she possibly tell them that Eddie is gone? How could she possibly articulate the words to convey the bottomless dread and guilt that consumes her?

How could she possibly choke out anything else other than a broken "*Code Red*"?

Hopper said not to, but as soon as his sister told him this is a Code Red, Will's fingers found the nearest phone. The first number he punched in is Mike's and the conversation is as follows:

"Hello?"

"It's Will. El's back."

"Did-"

"It's a code red." Beat. "Meet me at my house. I'm not there right now but- we'll be there soon."

"You said El's back." Another beat. "Where's Eddie?"

A final beat. "Code red. Call the others."

They had been at the Harrington's for maybe four minutes, and they were immediately going back home, this time with Steve and Eleven with them. When they got there, the entire party is crowded at the front door, minus Max. Will doesn't need to ask- they know they can't call her house and risk Neil picking up. If there's not answer on the walkie, then it's a no. They can tell her in the morning.

As soon as they get out of the car and El appears, it's a rush of questions, the most prominent ones asking if she and Eddie are alright, where's Eddie, is he staying in the car?

El doesn't answer, just hugs herself tighter until they get inside.

She doesn't know how to explain to the quiet kitchen exactly what happened, so she takes her time to formulate her story, listening to the satisfying clicks of Robin's nails against the wood table.

"We left. Obviously." El decides on saying after a few minutes. "Eddie was saying things about how he felt *drawn* elsewhere. We ended up with Kali." She says. Hopper puts his head in his hands. "He said that she needed him. That he need to be there to protected. He just... knew. It was weird." She draws in a final breath. "Then Papa showed up."

The entire room breaks out into catastrophe. Hopper shoots up from

his chair, his hands flying to the back of his neck. Jonathon steps away from the table with his mother. Robin's tapping nails stop, and her hand flies to her mouth while her other grabs Steve's bicep. Will looks like he's going to puke, but that's a blanket statement for everybody. It's Mike who grabs her hand with a comforting squeeze.

When she speaks again, the group pauses their commotion. "He was trying to take all three of us, and we would have fought him, but he was holding the other four h-hostage. He would have killed them." El explains, trying to power through the tears spilling down her cheeks. "Eddie offered to go willingly if he let Kali and I go." She finishes with a whisper. The catastrophe unpauses, louder than before. El doesn't listen, and Hopper doesn't complain when she asks Mike to take her upstairs so she can sleep, and he doesn't complain when she falls asleep in his arms, and he doesn't complain that they're in Eddie's room and not El's.

It's become clear that Eddie using his powers means he gets shocked, and they can tell because the sensors on his head. Touching the sensors results in mild shocks, and removing them results in the brain-splitting kind.

Eddie learned that the hard way. When he woke up after passing out, they had be reattached.

October 8th, 1987

Eddie was given food. He didn't eat it. He thinks about El, and he thinks about Richie. He thinks about how Lucas promised to give him lessons in wrist launchers. He thinks about how he'll never get those lessons. He thinks about how Richie will move on.

He wonders if they're going to try to save him.

He wonders if they know where he is.

He wonders what Brenner is going to do next.

Brenner wants to test him- his ability to procure flame and to touch it without pain fascinates the old man.

Eddie wants to burn *him*.

He almost does, but then Brenner smiles and coolly reiterates an address to Eddie that makes his blood run cold.

"That's where Ben Hanscom lives, isn't it?" Brenner asks. Eddie gapes at him, small noises leaving his throat. "I told you I've been watching you, Twelve. Now show me what you can do."

One of Brenner's men brings out a cat. Eddie wants to throw up.

Brenner repeats the address like he were answering a question in a classroom.

Eddie thinks about Patrick Hockstetter, and how the only thing that now sets them apart from each other is that Hockstetter is dead and Eddie is not.

Notes for the Chapter:

TW, SPOILER: implied murder of a cat

12. 12

This is her second night home, and she had to call Mike over to sleep because she couldn't without him. Her thoughts are too damn *loud*.

They weren't in danger- not until the last few hours, anyway. That's the baffling part. They were just having fun. They could have came home at any time. Kali wasn't holding either of them hostage.

They were just in the wrong place, at the wrong time, is what Joyce concluded. El, however, knows the truth- somehow, someway, her brother knew something was going to go wrong, and he was willing to sacrifice himself to fix it. That's the entire reason he went. He knew that if he wasn't there, Kali and her gang would be dead.

El would have never known, if she wasn't there. She'd eventually figure it out, and she'd be upset, but she would never known it was Brenner. And Brenner wouldn't have found Eddie and El, either, because if it weren't for the hostages and men with guns downstairs they would have ripped the old man in half and used his blood as eyeliner.

That's violent. Eleven doesn't care. She lays in Mike's arms, fuming, thinking about how she should have killed Brenner when she had the chance- instead, she had shown mercy on her *Papa*.

Stupid. Stupid, stupid. And look where stupidity got her.

El wants to scream and cry and break something. She wants to talk to Jonathon, because he knows how it feels when a brother goes missing.

She wants to talk to Richie, because she thinks he's the only person who can come close to feeling how she does.

For now, she goes to sleep.

October 10th, 1987

"We're going to try something new, Twelve." Brenner's voice says.

Eddie still has no idea where he is, and he isn't any closer to finding out. His throat hurts. The immediate room he's in is almost entirely white, and a thick glass separates Eddie from the scientists and etcetera on the other side. Eddie is a lab rat, and nothing more.

"What." Eddie asks with a monotone voice, staring straight ahead, focused on the glass rather than the people on the other side of it.

"You find people, like Eleven, correct?"

Eddie does not respond, so he's met with the stringing kiss of electricity biting his neck. Quickly, he gasps out an answer- "Yes."

"I need you to find someone for me." Brenner says, and looks to Eddie expectantly. "Say, 'yes'."

"Y-yes."

Brenner smiles. "Victor Criss."

Eddie gapes at him, but nonetheless replies in the affirmative and lets his eyes close. Eddie could do anything now- he could go see Richie or El and tell them what's wrong, but he knows he can't do that without making them unsafe- Eddie doesn't even look at Victor for more than two seconds before he's once again seething with pain. "I was-!"

"That was long enough. Is he at home?"

Ice water fills Eddie veins. He hates Vic, but whatever Brenner wants to do to him, he doesn't deserve. Why would Brenner targeted him? Who else would he hurt? If he is planning to hurt or kill some irrelevant bully just to prove a point... what would he do to someone who is close to Eddie?

Eddie thinks of Richie begging for his life, scrambling away, running as fast as he can-

No.

El wouldn't let that happen.

Everyone is fine. Eddie will be fine. He just has to... listen. "He's at home."

The door next to Eddie opens, and in walks a man; he places a laminated picture in front of Eddie of another kid, then leaves. Eddie examines the picture with interest. He doesn't know the boy, but he can tell from the bald head and lack of smile that he's another experiment ran by Brenner. He cheeks are sunken in and his eyes carry dark bags. He's certainly younger than Eddie, too. His heart pangs with sadness.

"Ever seen him before?"

"No." Eddie answers truthfully.

Brenner nods. "He's Fifteen. Remarkable regenerative capabilities- all sorts of cuts and bruises heal right up. Sounds fascinating, I'm sure." Brenner pauses. "I'm sure." He repeats.

"Yes."

"Our next step is to see if he could project these abilities outward. So far, he's a failure. Right now, he's in his room. Talk to him."

Eddie clears his throat. "That's all?"

"That's all."

His eyes shut, and the Void around him turns to a dark contrast against his white-with-blue-dots gown. An equally white and stiff bed across from him holds the boy in the picture.

"Hello?" Eddie asks the boy, who remains staring ahead, in a trance. Usually, when Eddie *pulls* people into the Void, they seem a little more shocked.

"It's dark." Fifteen says casually. "I don't like the dark." Eddie allows his eyes to skirt over the younger boy's milk-white skin. He's skinny and pale, and looks like he doesn't eat enough. He probably doesn't. Eddie can't help but see the boy in front of him as a cruel fate, but he'll try anything to avoid that- after all, Fifteen doesn't need electro therapy to subdue him, if his lack of a collar is any indication. He just

listens. Eddie wonders how long the boy had been there.

"I can imagine." Eddie says, if his first few hours here has shown him anything.

"They have a dark room for when I misbehave. I don't like the dark, Twelve."

"My name is Eddie. My real name."

"I know." Fifteen says. Brenner or one of the guards must have told him, or maybe he heard Eddie screaming for them to call him by his name and not a number. That's pretty likely.

"What's yours? Have you always been Fifteen?"

Fifteen is silent for a while before he answers, "For as long as it matters."

Eddie is pulled out of the Void by the immense pain that follows, encasing his throat. Brenner is saying something that Eddie doesn't listen to. Even when the pain subsides. Fifteen's face dances in his head- a little boy, not even older than ten, subject to the horrors that Eddie's facing for- for-

For how long?

Hours? Days? Eddie doesn't know. There aren't clocks.

"Twelve!" Eddie hears, and his trance is broken.

"Yes?"

"Did you hear me?"

"No."

Brenner is silent. He looks to one of the people next to him dressed in white. Before Eddie can begin to wonder what's going to happen, he and three others disappear from view before reappearing, entering the room that Eddie's in. Eddie scrambles away, but the room's too small- they grab him.

Eddie, like Fifteen, is scared of the dark, yet he doesn't attempt to create a light.

13. 13

Notes for the Chapter:

i always forget about this fic a little but then i see a comment and remember to post LMAO

October 14th, 1987

They haven't told Richie yet.

Not any of the Losers.

They go to school, and act like nothing's wrong.

(Everything is wrong.)

El picks up her backpack and goes to lessons and sits down in Mr. Clarke's class. The teacher asks where Eddie is, and El smiles and says that he's sick. That he'll be back soon. She wonders how far she'll take the lie, and for how long.

She goes right home after school- not to Lucas' house with everyone else to hang out, because Hopper would install cameras in the school to watch her 24/7 now, if he had the resources. The windows in her and Eddie's room are locked, too. She could break them if she wanted, but she doesn't. They don't just keep her in.

They keep other people out.

El finds herself in the Void often, watching Richie, which is something new. She almost never uses her powers, even though Eddie uses them often- it feels invasive. And Eddie's told her that he's seen his friends in numerous situations that he shouldn't have seen them in. Peeing, picking their nose, making out- though he didn't say who. El's deduced that it was Bill and the girl he talks about, Audra, because he'd just say if it were Ben and Bev.

"Today." El says at the quiet dinner table, sitting next to an empty chair with a plate placed on the table in front of it out of habit.

There's actually two empty chairs- Jonathon is back at school- but that's how it's supposed to be. Eddie being gone feels... cosmically incorrect. "Now. We call the Losers."

"They can't... help." Hopper answers- this is his whole reasoning. They know vaguely about Brenner and what the Party and co. went through, but they don't know everything in detail. They just know Papa sucked. No specifics- El didn't want to talk about that. Nobody truly knows, except for her. Maybe Eddie, now. "This isn't their fight."

"Pennywise wasn't ours." Will chimes in.

Hopper heavily sets down his fork. "When we get Eddie back, we can tell the Derry kids that he got in a little trouble. But they don't need to worry. I've called Owens."

"If." Will counters. "If we get Eddie back."

El's eyes fly open and her hands clench into fists, looking at him with severe anger for Will even beginning to consider that. "Will-

" 'Will' what? You're the one who said Brenner is ruthless-"

"Eddie's not dead!"

"Then why can't you find him in the Void?" Will counters.

"Because- because-" El takes a shuddering breath, unable to think of a reason why. She'd been ignoring that.

Joyce comes to the rescue, clearing her throat, her voice breaking through the waves of anxiety formed by the arguing children. "Because Eddie's powers are different than her, and he might not want to be found." She finishes, her tone sounding logical even if she doesn't sound entirely convinced. "He wouldn't want us following him and putting him in danger, so he's not letting you find him."

El nods, and slowly looks to Hopper, deciding to move the conversation forward. "You said you called Owens?"

Hopper hesitates a moment before he begins to answer. "Yeah. He, uh, is looking to find where Brenner can be. Every government

funded lab on and off record is being searched. Until then, we wait."

Joyce clears her throat. "We're not good at waiting."

"Not at all." Eleven agrees. She stabs some of the chicken on her plate with her fork. "I won't wait to tell the Losers." She puts the food in her mouth, wipes her hands on her pants, and walks over to the phone without any protest.

October 15th, 1987

Richie is on El's front doorstep.

Bill is, too. They're the only two who could come on such short notice- El didn't even ask them to come. They just came holding bags and expecting to take Jonathon's room, which Hopper approves because has no other choice, other than send them back on the train to Derry and Hopper knows he'd have to sedate them to do that. Richie spends most his time trailing El, talking about elaborate plans to find and save Eddie, ranging from storming Area 51 to checking the sewers of Hawkins.

"He could be pulling a Betty and running around the sewers! I'm just saying!" Richie insists as El attempts to peacefully take milk out of the fridge for her cereal.

"Betty Ripsom i-is dead." Bill says, entirely deadpan.

The humor falls off of Richie's face and he stills, the weight of his joke settling in. "That's not- what I meant. Eddie's fine."

"Hopefully." Will agrees- his feelings on the subject tend to fluctuate between hopelessness and absolute sureness every now and then, the former being more constant. Richie shoots him a smile as El begins to pull out four bowls. It's 8:00 PM at night and they've all already had dinner, but that's not stopping them. They fully intend to stay awake and pretend they can fix this.

El's not sure if they can.

So far, the searches Owen's ordered has brought up no hope. They started in Chicago and around the area, checking in and around every government facility, making sure they're up to code and not harboring any teenagers. They're moving outward now, willing to search all of America to make sure that a criminal doesn't have access to the most powerful person on earth, and to make sure the Hopper-Byers family keeps their lips sealed on government secrets more secretive than nuclear weaponry.

El places spoons in the bowls and the three boys start to eat, Richie not even bother to sit down with his food and instead standing at the kitchen island and beginning to shovel the colorful, sugary loops into his mouth. The other three take the time to sit down; Will sits cross-legged.

"Maybe h-he's juh-just hiding." Will offers, something in his eyes showing that his mind is elsewhere.

"What Mom said yesterday made sense." El adds.

"Mrs. Byers? My favorite topic." Richie jokes, his excitement falling flat when no short hypochondriac calls him a "fuckass" and tells him to shut up.

"Wh-what'd she say?"

"That *he's* not letting me find him because he's in trouble and doesn't want me following him." El explains. She looks down at her hands, not entirely sold on the idea. She had always hated being the twin that was forgotten, left at the laboratory, while Eddie got to go free, but that didn't mean that she wished anything was different. She never wanted Eddie to experience what she did. If she had it her way, Brenner would be dead. He's *supposed* to be.

Richie blinks. "I like that theory."

"Me, too." Will agrees.

"H-how do we know it's true?"

El shrugs. "When I tried to find Barb, I still found her body. When I look for Eddie, I see... nothing."

"Barb was in the Upside Down." Will tries. "Have you ever tried it with someone who was... normal dead?"

"Try Mrs.K." Richie offers.

El shakes her head. "I don't know what she looks like. I'd need a picture."

"Bob?" Will asks.

"Mom doesn't really talk about him. The only picture I've seen is the drawing on the fridge."

"Georgie." Bill offers quietly. He fishes something out of his pocket- his wallet- and opens it to reveal a picture of a smiling little boy that El knows is his little brother. "You've s-seen pictures of him. I-It wasn't normal, but all those floating kids... Maybe G-Georgie... You could j-just try."

"Bill." Richie says. Bill looks at him sadly, so Richie places a hand on his shoulder.

"I... I don't..." El shakes her head.

"It doesn't h-have to be him. H-he was just the first that came to m-mind. I've always w-wonder if..."

"If you see something, then we'd know Eddie's not dead!"

"And if she sees *something*, Richie?" Will raises his eyebrow. "She'd see a dead body. Georgie's, nonetheless."

"I-I d-didn't th-thuh-th-think-"

"It's alright, Bill." El says softly. "Maybe later. Not when I've just eaten."

"El, you don't have to look for anybody, if you don't want to."

"I know." She exhales slowly. "I don't want to, but I will. Tomorrow. Can we watch a movie?"

14. 14

Notes for the Chapter:

there's literally no reason i've been gone this long. i have like six or seven chapters to post now, though! hey guys.

They always end up here when things go wrong: surrounding El in dead silence as she placed a blindfold over her eyes.

In case she found something she didn't want to see- nothing- she wanted to be surrounded by friends. Seeing nothing means that Eddie's as dead as Georgie. That would put El, Will, and Jonathon as the third, fourth, and fifth members of the Dead Brothers Club, a club you did not want to join. They know what El might find- most likely, a small body with one arm, a sweatshirt, and yellow boots. It would most likely be grey and bloated like the other bodies the sewer spit up, if it's magic hadn't prevented it from decaying like a normal body would. El has a bucket to chuck into, and Hopper won't stop telling her that she doesn't need to do this, it's not a good idea, nobody is forcing her.

"I know nobody is forcing me."

The entire Party is here, too, which isn't usual- if El uses her powers (in situations where she's not trying to save the world) the group doesn't crowd around. They're all here because... because it feels like fucking Judgement Day. Because if El doesn't see a body, does that mean Eddie's dead?

What do they do?

Max nods. "El's doing it because she wants to."

"She knows her limits." Mike says, which receives a slap on the back from Max. El smiles at him and begins to wait for the the room to settle.

Whenever they're together, the conversation never lulls, especially

when the Losers are here. Bill, however, is quiet.

Eleven's never looked for Georgie. Bill never bothered to ask- by the time they met, he had finally come to terms with the death, and his parents were on their way. It's different without Georgie, of course, but they're... healing.

Bill tries to squash the boy inside him that's saying, *he m-might be in the Barrens, guh-g-guys*. He takes a breath. Eleven locks eyes with him as she pulls the blindfold, yellow and black, over her eyes, and the room falls silent.

They watch. El's head moves slightly, her face twitches, her fingers curl. She breathes out, slow and shaky. Blood trickles out her nose.

It couldn't have been even a minute when she tears the blindfold off her face with a strangled noise, turns to her right and grabs the bucket. She chucks, and everyone hisses and turns to look away. Bill was already out the door the second she pulled off the black and yellow rag with a gasp. He makes his way to the front porch and sits down in the steps, heaving cold winter air.

He wonders how bad Georgie's body looked that it brought her to puking.

The door opens behind him, sending a surge of the warm air from within the house against his back, but Bill doesn't turn around. He stares at the road. A car passes. He hears Max sit down next to him, and he feels her head lay on his shoulder, but he doesn't say anything.

"Wanna talk about it?" Max asks. Though he had initially found similarities, he's found that Max and Beverly are very distinct. When Bev talks, her voice floats with the air around her, caressing and swirling and spilling into ears. Max doesn't have the same softness accessible to her like her red headed counterpart- her words hit like an arrow, sure and precise.

"No." Bill answers, but keeps talking anyways. "I just w-wonder what she s-saw, you know? How b-bad it is."

Max doesn't haven't have anything comforting to say. If she were Beverly, she'd stroke his hair and tell him the Georgie loved him, that Georgie wouldn't want him to be upset, Georgie this, Georgie that.

Max gets it. She gets that hopeless crushing feeling, the way that sometimes they just need to admit that everything sucks and they can't really fix it, not truly.

"Do you think Eddie's okay?"

Bill chews his lip. "Yeah. Yeah, I do."

There's a burst of noise from inside that starts with Richie screaming, "Holy fucking shit!" that causes Max's head to snap up from his shoulder and look towards the front door. She laughs uncomfortably, then looks at Bill. He looks back, and wonders what bad news they just received.

Bill hears his name said a few times, which confuses him. They wait for the commotion to subside.

It doesn't.

Bill hears his name again. Max starts getting suspicious. Bill wonders if she realizes that she's gripping his arm with such force that it feels like it may break, but he doesn't mention it.

The door bursts open to reveal Mike, his eyes wide. "Get the fuck in here. Right now, Bill. Right fucking now." He looks frazzled, rather than upset. Not like El had seen nothing and confirmed that Eddie's dead, too.

"Is Eddie-" Max begins.

"Right fucking now!" Mike repeats and turns around.

Max and Bill exchange a look- in just a few seconds, they both stand and follow a frantic Mike in the door. When they get inside, everyone looks stunned. Bill's heart stops when he sees Richie.

Richie, red in the face and crying, and all Bill can think is *Eddie's dead Eddie's dead Eddie's dead Eddie's dead* and he can't breath or think or

anything and Joyce tells him to sit down, sweetie, and everyone's looking at him with these big pitiful eyes because Eddie's dead and he's the last to find out. He watches Lucas whisper something to Max, watches her mouth fall open and her hand go to cover it, and she has the big pitiful eyes now too, and Bill wants this to be over already, just tell him his best friend is dead, too, so he can move on, but nobody is saying anything- just staring with with big pitiful eyes and-

"We found Eddie." Joyce says softly, cutting Bill out of his panic.

"Oh." Bill says, feeling stupid. His eyes dark around the room, passing over stressed faces. "Then why..."

Richie is the one to speak up. "We found Georgie, too."

Notes for the Chapter:

also i just reread this entire series and wow i hate my old writing

15. 15

"What." Bill says. It's not a question, just a pathetic statement. He looks apprehensive towards the information, like it's a transplanted organ and his white blood cells are working hard to reject it.

El had expected to see a body when she entered the Void. At first, she saw nothing- the water rippling under her feet was the only noise besides her shaky breath as she moved through the Void. She saw nothing, and her stomach was twisting.

Then she heard a small noise and she didn't even know what emotion she felt- fear, maybe? Corpses aren't supposed to make noises. And relief, because if there's a noise, there must be something she could see- which means not nothing, which means Joyce is right, which means Eddie's absence from the Void has no correlation with death.

So, she didn't know what to expect when she turned around.

She did not expect to see two boys with shaved heads, sitting cross legged on a stiff white bed, one of the boys smiling and so obviously her brother. The other was Bill's brother, with two arms and "015" tattooed into his inner wrist.

El hadn't stayed any longer than that. By then, she was hurling.

She tells Bill all- most- of this, his expression remaining bland the entire time, until she finally gets to the end of it. "They're in New York." She finishes with, and Bill's head snaps up. She doesn't include much else, because she doesn't know much else- she just felt where they were. She couldn't find an exact address- something was holding her off. Even subconsciously, Eddie was trying to protect her.

Eleven has never seen a person look so sad. She had been deprived of her childhood, and she doesn't think even she could replicate the absolutely crushing hopelessness, the numbness of his features, if she tried. "This entire time?" He asks quietly. El responds with a slow nod, and then he puts his head in his hands. They all stay like that for a while. A long, quiet while. Hopper and Joyce talk in hushed voices, as does mostly everyone else- Robin with Steve, Lucas and Dustin,

Mike and Will, Richie and El.

Max stays silent. She's in the corner and though Mike had approached her, she snapped at him until he left her to wallow against the pale green wall of the Hopper household. She's staring at Bill and not trying to hide it; she's more interested in figuring out if she despises him, or his brother, or if she doesn't despise anyone and is happy for him. God, she should be happy for him. Georgie is *alive*. He'd be happy for her if it were Billy who came back.

Max shuts her eyes, to look at nothing at all, because she feels like she might set Bill on fire if she keeps glaring at him like that. She imagines what they'll be like together- if Georgie will see his brother he hasn't seen since an October like this one so many years ago, and run into his arms, and cry out, "Billy!" in his little kid voice like Max so desperately wishes she could do.

"Let's go." Steve offers. Max snaps her eyes open.

Robin hops on. "We'll take the train. We'll all go. We'll get the Losers-"

"No." Hopper cuts off quickly. "No, I'll tell Owens. Everybody's going home. Let the adults handle this. There are rules and laws that he's breaking, and Owens has a team that can take them out."

Joyce nods and crosses her arms. "You're all just children. You should have never been involved with any of this in the first place."

"But-"

"But, this isn't your job. You guys aren't... the fucking ghost busters." Hopper argues.

"How fast?" Richie asks. "How fast can Owens get Eds and Georgie?"

"I'll have to call, first. Everyone go home."

Bill and Richie don't sleep that night. Nobody does. Bill tosses and turns in his bed and talks to Richie, and Hopper doesn't knock on the door and tell them to quiet down like he usually does. He holds Joyce close and pretends he doesn't hear Bill crying.

Eddie doesn't sleep that night.

He felt his sister. He's sure of it.

He doesn't want to her to come here, but maybe, if she found a way to come save him, it would be fine, right? Because he hates this. Fifteen is too young to be here, and he looks at Eddie like he hangs the moon even though they've only known each other for what feels like a few days (Eddie doesn't have a clock or a window). It's probably because Eddie's the first person even relatively close in age to Fifteen, even if the other boy is a few years younger. Maybe he sees Eddie like a brother.

Eddie's so fucking tired, all the time. His neck still hurts, but it turns out that Fifteen's regenerative capabilities aren't confined to himself- he can help others too, though it tends to tire him out. The first time Georgie realized that Eddie's neck was covered in bruises and burns, he had fixed it, and then fell asleep with his head on Eddie's lap.

They don't get to see each other every day, but Brenner's come to realize that Eddie behaves better when he sees Fifteen, and Fifteen does, too. Not that Eddie misbehaves often anymore. He lets Brenner have his experiments- from what he can tell, they're not working, so he doesn't mind. He's hellbent on translating Eddie's powers into something more:

Electricity, which makes sense.

It doesn't work. Brenner tries and fails, and Eddie tries to figure out what about Fifteen is so damn familiar, and he fails, too.

He misses El and Hopper and Joyce and Will and Jonathon. He hopes they're okay.

He misses Kali. He's glad it's him and not her. He thinks Maturin is, too.

He doesn't wear the electrotherapy collar between experiments. He could probably check on his friends. Call for help.

He doesn't.

He doesn't want the help, because it could backfire. It could land the people he loves in trouble. Eddie will get himself out of here, eventually, and he'll get Fifteen out, too, and he doesn't need Eleven and the rest of his friends and family to put themselves in danger and do it for him. He just needs a plan.

He doesn't have one.

16. 16

October 16th, 1987

Steve has a plan. A very good one, thank you very much, but he needs a little confirmation first. Hopper and Joyce are not included. That's their own fault, though, because they're being assholes, even though Eddie's in trouble. That's not fair to anybody. Especially not Eddie. Or El. Or Richie. Or Will. Or Steve. Or- anybody. It's just not fair that Steve has spent the past years taking care of these kids, and now one is just gone.

Robin will help him. She will absolutely be on board with an crazy fucking plan he thinks of, because she's his best friend and they'd definitely die for each other. This is how Steve finds himself outside her window, even though it's late at night. The lamp in her room is on and she's sitting up in bed, so he knows that he doesn't have to be a dick and wake her up, even though that's not beneath him and Robin screaming about how he smells after he jumps on her is priceless.

Still. That's for fun stuff. This is serious stuff. Serious *shit*.

Because shit is more serious than stuff.

He opens up the window and Robin's eyes widen.

"Steve!" She hisses as he clamors in, ducking his head under the glass pane of the window and ungracefully adjusting his position.

"Surprised?" He asks. His foot gets caught on the window sill, so he has to bend his body's awkwardly to get it unstuck, and ends up falling on his ass. He usually falls on his ass even though he's came here often enough at night that he should have perfected his technique by now. Regardless, he always makes it inside and only got a bruise once and that was because Robin kicked him so it wasn't even really his false.

"You need to leave!" She snarls, looking at her door and then back to her floor-bound friend.

"Relax. We're not gonna get caught." He reaches his hand up and Robin immediately takes it, pulling him back to his feet even though her face looks like she wants him to burn in hell.

"No. Steve. Go. Right now. You can't-" Robin looks at her door then back at Steve, glaring.

"I have a plan for Eddie." He offers.

Immediately, Robin's face softens and she blows out air. Steve can smell her breath- minty, like she just brushed her teeth. "Fast. Fast." She says, because she knows this situation is some serious shit.

"He's in New York, right? With Brenner. But Brenner isn't going to give Eddie up without a fight. And he probably has other kids, if he has Georgie and Eddie, and Owen's people aren't going to fire at kids, so Brenner would use that, right? He knows that there's no way that Owens can take them with physical force."

"I- uh- yeah. That makes... sense." Robin blinks. "And we know that there's no way Brenner would hurt Eddie or Georgie. He's too proud of them. But, what does that mean? What would we do?"

"I don't have a step by step-"

"Hurry up!"

"So. We sneak out- I mean you and me. Not the kids."

"We're kids."

"Shut up. We sneak out and follow Owens, and while he's doing whatever stupid passive legal shit he thinks is gonna stop that psychopath, we sneak in and get Eddie and Georgie. Except Owens can't know we're there. Obviously."

"Steve. Are you fucking stupid? Of course the plan is to get Eddie and Georgie. Everyone knows that. We need a plan to *do* that."

"I'm not stupid."

"We would need Eleven to sneak in. That place is probably a fortress-

it's a government base hiding at least two people with superpowers. And at least one of the two has literally contacted God."

"Fine. Eleven can come. And she'll be able to help with the plan, too."

"But if Eleven comes, Will follows."

"Then Will can-"

"So then Mike comes. So Dustin comes. So Lucas comes. So Max comes. So Richie comes. So Bill- who would forcibly come anyway-comes. So then the entire Losers Club comes. You do realize that, right? We're a team now. And I know you want to protect them, but they want to do the same. There's no way we pull off saving Eddie without all of us."

"So. New York. Whenever Owen's is going. We'll figure out-"

Robin is about to add something when a voice rings out.

"What the fuck?" The voice says, and Robin's head whips behind her to the now open door, with a blonde girl in the doorway.

"Shit. How much of that did you hear?" Robin says, eyes wide.

"What did you mean by government base? Superpowers?" Then she looks at Steve and frowns. "Did you give her acid?"

"No. What? We're- sober. Why are you here?"

"Robin's my friend. Why are you here?"

"Robin's my best friend."

The girl turns to Robin. "You weren't kidding when you said he's your best friend? I thought you were fucking with me. He's such a dick. He thinks I'm a bad singer. Which is true, but he doesn't need to be an asshole about it."

Who the curly haired blonde girl is finally clicks in Steve's head-Tammy Thompson, who has previously been brunette. Steve hadn't known that they were friends.

And then Steve remembers that it's also 1 AM and Tammy's wearing Robin's shirt, and suddenly he realizes that they aren't friends.

"Oh. Oh my god. Suzie! She's Suzie!" Steve says to Robin.

"My name isn't Suzie. We went to high school together!"

"That's not what he means. It's a- he knows- Suzie is the name of Dustin's girlfriend."

Tammy's angry expression quickly falters and drops with understanding, and Steve wonders how much Robin talks about all of them that Tammy didn't feel the need to question who Dustin is. The shocked girl makes her way inside the room and slowly sits down on the foot of the bed.

"I'm not- you're not going to-"

"Don't worry about it." Steve says simply.

Tammy crosses her arms. "Um. Well. New York? You were saying something about going to New York. Why...?"

"It's hard to explain." Robin answers.

"I've got time." She blinks. "You also said some stuff about superpowers and God and the government? So you should be grateful I asked about New York first."

"Well. We're going to New York. A friends there."

"Kidnapped? By a psychopath. Bernard?" She asks, trying to remember the part of the conversation she heard.

"Brenner." Robin replies.

Steve looks at her strangely. "We can't tell her this."

"You have to." Tammy responds. "I'm coming with you to New York. I'm part of the team now, Harrington."

Steve looks to Robin, expecting for her to protest and insist that it's

nothing, that, yes, they're on acid and they're totally fucking with her, but Robin says nothing. Well, she says "Okay." And then that's that, that's final, and then Steve is basically thrown out the window by Tammy with the threat of getting his dick chopped off if he tells anyone what he knows.

All in all, a good night.

They'll get more detail for their "plan" in the morning.